

## **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)**

After writing my last article, The Holiday Blues, it was apparent to me that this article would be a perfect segway in explaining both topics and their similarities, and I recommend you read the article on Holiday Blues before you read this one. Both disorders share the same mood changes, however the Holiday Blues relates specifically to the obvious depression during the holiday seasons. SAD is a disorder that is not triggered by specific events but by seasonal changes. Typically, this disorder finds people sad and not feeling their usual selves.

In some cases, these mood changes are more serious and can affect how a person feels, thinks and handles daily activities. If you have noticed a significant change in your moods and behavior whenever the season changes, you may be suffering from seasonal affective disorder ( SAD ) , a type of depression.

In most cases, SAD symptoms start in the late fall or early winter and go away during the spring and summer months. This is known by many as winter-pattern SAD or winter depression. But let's not think it only happens in the fall and winter months, for it also can occur in the summer months but it is less common. I myself did not have depression in the summers but did in the winter months. Luckily, I had the wherewithal to vacation in the warm weather later on in life, which gave me a reprieve from the cold and Northeast winters. Today I have the privilege of living in Maine during the summer months and Florida in the winter. What a difference it has made for me and my mental health.

For winter-patterns SAD, additional specific symptoms may include.

1. Oversleeping
2. Overeating
3. Weight gain
4. Social withdrawal

Specific symptoms for summer pattern SAD may include

1. Trouble sleeping
2. Poor appetite, leading to weight loss
3. Restlessness and agitation
4. Anxiety
5. Episodes of violent behavior

Many people may suffer from SAD and not know it. It occurs more often in women than men and is more common in those living farther north, where there are shorter daylight hours in the winter. For example, people living in Alaska or New England may be more likely to develop Seasonal Affective Disorder as opposed to people like me who live in Florida, fortunate enough to have warm weather year-round. SAD sometimes runs in families and is more common in people who have relatives with other mental illnesses, such as major depression and schizophrenia.

There are so many resources available to all who need help coping not only with this disorder but all mental illnesses. You can call National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, text the Crisis text line, or call National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. I urge all who read this article to reach out and get help if and when you need it. Don't sit there and self-destruct.

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